

FIRST AND CENTER

Pastor's Blog

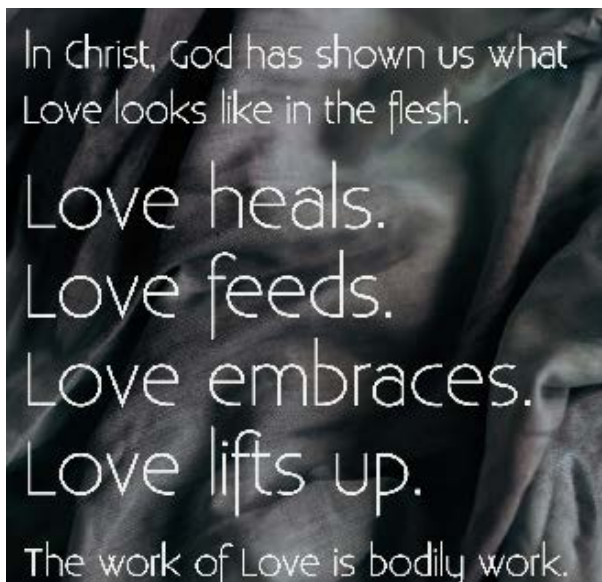
March 1, 2018

We are an old city church. Our buildings sit right in the middle of downtown Hartford, blocks in any direction from large corporations, city hall, a federal courthouse, and the statehouse of Connecticut. What does it mean to be in the "center" as Center Church, tucked in between skyscrapers, government buildings, and Bushnell Park?

Part of what it means is that we receive all those people who are often invisible to the corporate offices high up off the street and, too often, to those in government buildings as well. Every single day, people come to our Church House and ring the bell seeking help of many kinds. People need dental work and have heard about our Bed Funds with Hartford Hospital (so far this year, \$93,185). People need help with rent or security deposits and have heard about our funds available for that (so far this year over \$5,000). People hear we have a room with computers where they can look for jobs or connect with social services of many kinds. People hear we have a closet with clothing and toiletries (400 items distributed in February). People hear we are one of the triage centers for the shelter program in Hartford from November till the end of March, and they come to find a safe place to spend the night and a hot meal (25-50 people any given evening Wed.-Sun.). People hear they are welcome to come to worship, even if they spent the night on the streets, and each Sunday we welcome guests and meet new friends. People hear we have a heart for justice and they invite us to join them in marches or at state government hearings or rallies for those about to be deported or ask to have educational events in our buildings.

Because of our location, our endowed mission funds, our excellent Outreach Minister and office staff, our willing volunteers, we are a church that practices what theologian Jim Wallis calls "public discipleship." We do not teach or practice a faith that is private, just about "Jesus and me." Yes, in worship and prayer and visits and faith formation programs, we nurture our individual relationships with God, but we do not stop there. This is who Center Church is.

When was the last time you told someone who we are, and that you are part of a dynamic group of public disciples: not street corner evangelizers, but people of faith dedicated to being agents of love in the world? Those who need to be helped hear about us; how about those who can join us in the helping? What can you do to make sure "people hear" about the fullness of Center Church and that Christians are more than the stereotypes of angry, exclusive people they see on the news?



~ Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Pastor